riveted, soldered, or welded. Moreover, Claims 6 and 7, which depend from Claim 5, also do not related to the stamped part being riveted, soldered, or welded. Thus, in relation to the election requirement, Claims 5, 6, and 7 would be generic and, therefore, the election requirement is improper. It is noted that Claim 3 relates to the stamped parts being riveted, soldered, or welded together. However, Claim 3 does not depend from Claim 5, nor any other claim which depends from Claim 5. No claims depend from Claim 3. It is asked that in response to this Reply, the Examiner further clarify the restriction.

Claims 1-4, 20, 21, 24, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Sander. These rejections are respectfully traversed. Following is a comparison of the prior art and this reference and an explanation as how the claims patentably distinguish the invention over this reference.

U.S. Patent No. 6,182,527 to Sander corresponds to DE 198 32 868 and EP 0 974 776, previously cited. As noted in previous amendments, Sander does not disclose or suggest that the functional component comprises at least three stamped parts. Sander does not mention that any of the parts are stamped. The advantage of the parts being stamped is that the individual parts themselves are produced at considerably lower outlay compared to other processes. The relatively thin-walled parts can be machined considerably more easily compared to the known components. Sander does not mention or recognize that the sandwich design of the locking elements offers advantages from the production technology point of view. Making the functional component of at least three stamped parts allows precisely reproducible production of precision functional contours of the functional component with relatively little outlay, while the rigidity for the transmission of high forces remains ensured, as noted in the specification at page 4, lines 7-17.

In order to anticipate, a single reference must teach every element of the claim. Since Sander does not mention at least three stamped parts, Sander cannot anticipate the claimed invention. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is not anticipated by Sander, as noted above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Regarding Claim 2, Sander does not disclose that the plastic cover is formed from plastic borders which have been clicked into place or have been secured in undercuts or cutouts of the middle stamped part and surround a hole edge. The Office Action has alleged that the plastic borders 18 and 25 are secured in undercuts 26 or cutouts of the middle stamped part and surround a hole edge A. The alleged undercut 26 is simply a recess, which is filled with the injection coating 25 and allows for deformation of the injection coating until the latching element abuts the outer disks 12 and 13 (see column 5, lines 45-55). This recess does not provide for the plastic borders to be secured to the middle stamped part. As seen in Figure 6, recess 26 is simply a straight recess and does not provide for connection of the plastic. Moreover, Sander discloses that in all instances the plastic is injected injection-coated and not preformed. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is not anticipated by Sander as noted above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Regarding Claim 3, Sander does not disclose that the stamped parts are riveted, soldered, or welded together. The Office Action has alleged that Sander discloses the stamped parts being riveted together, as shown in Figure 3, by head 22 (column 4, lines 57-60). However, Sander shows that a central rod 20 of the injection coating is formed on the disks 11-13 and the rod extends through the holes 14 in the disks. This rod is then pressed against the outer disks to form a head 22, similar to the rivet head, by heating. However, this does not disclose

that the disks 11-13 are riveted together. Sander discloses that this injection coating, which is heated and formed to the outer layer of the disks, is similar to a rivet head and is not riveting. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is not anticipated by Sander, as noted above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the application is respectfully submitted to be in condition for allowance, and prompt favorable action thereon is earnestly solicited.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #225/49427).

Respectfully submitted,

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